

Abstract:-

Traditionally, it was believed that religion, social status and property were the source of power and authority through which a few controlled the liberty of the others. To overcome this, Ambedkar's political philosophy advocates the use of force and social organization in determining important issues in any society. He



THE RECEDED FACET OF AMBEDKAR'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

M. Shashidhar

Associate Professor, Post Graduate Department of History,
Bangalore University, Bangalore.

proposes that the combined strength of the untouchables alone was a remedy to their ailing issues. It was their strength alone that was capable of influencing the decision of the majority, which were at times contrary to their interests. The only method by which the community could overcome the impediment of their development was by relaying on the importance of being organized what others espoused through violence was intended to be achieved by Ambedkar through constitutional means.

Keywords:

Ambedkar, Political Philosophy, Annihilation of Caste, Depressed Classes, Scheduled Caste, Dalits, Communal Award, Society.

INTRODUCTION

Ambedkar's thought has been much debated in the recent years. However the crux of Ambedkar's thought has far been realized when it comes to realizing the distant dream of the Untouchables. The paper is an attempt to unravel the idea central to the discussion envisaged by Ambedkar.

Ambedkar in all most all his work has time and again reiterated the importance of force in determining important issues in society. Ambedkar in 'Annihilation of Caste' refers to Ferdinand Lassalle, a friend and co-worker of Karl Marx. Lassalle in his address to the Prussian audience in 1862 said: "The constitutional questions are in the first instance not questions of right but questions of might.... Political constitutions have value and permanence only when they accurately express those conditions of forces which exist in practice within a society." (Ambedkar, Vol.1, P.42). The significance of this statement was realized by Ambedkar by drawing a parallel in the circumstance of Communal Award. The Communal Award made allocation of political power in defined proportions to diverse classes and communities. It is here that Ambedkar advocates that "political constitution must take note of social organization." (Ambedkar, Vol.1, P.42.)

Further in the making of the constitution, Ambedkar emphasized the fact that they could not ignore the problem arising out of the prevailing social order. Traditionally it was believed that religion, social status and property were the source of power and authority wherein men used to control the liberty of the others. Ambedkar speaking on revolution resulting in the seizure of power hints indirectly at the combined strength of the masses to bring about required change. He states that in this endeavor, "the only thing that will move one man to take such an action is the feeling that other man with whom he is acting are actuated by feeling of equality and fraternity and above all of justice" (Ambedkar, Vol.1, P.46.).

Further Ambedkar feels that the anti-social spirit is the worst feature of caste system. Caste consciousness has served to prevent solidarity. This solidarity could be within castes per se or between groups of castes (Ambedkar, Vol.1, P. 51-52.). Elsewhere, Ambedkar while explaining issues related to politics of democracy mentions that "Men are not interested in principles and policies. But they are interested in accomplishing things." Hence what is necessary for accomplishing things is "to bring about concerted action." For he believed that "things can be accomplished not by individual voice but by concerted action.... for concerted action what is necessary is the crystallization of individual opinions into public opinions" (Ranade, Jinnah and Gandhi, Vol.1, P. 238).

Ambedkar in 1919, while giving evidence before the Southborough Committee on Franchise, spoke in defense of the untouchable's population and points out 3 distinct things of prime concern.

1. None other than the untouchables alone can speak for the interests of the untouchables.
2. There are certain exclusive and definite set of interests of the untouchables and they can be and have to be represented by the untouchables alone. The others cannot represent the interests of the untouchables as they are not untouchables themselves. Hence we must find the untouchables to represent their grievances, which are their exclusive interests.
3. We must find them in such numbers as will constitute a force sufficient to claim redress. (Report of the Reform Committee (Franchise), Vol.2, 1919)

To achieve these objectives Ambedkar advocates increasing the number of voters among the untouchables by lowering their franchise limit. The chief significance of suffrage or a political right was emphasized as it consisted of "a chance for active and direct participation in the regulation of the terms upon which associated life shall be sustained" (Report of the Reforms Committee (Franchise), Vol.2, 1919, P.256).

The untouchables must be in a position to influence the decision of the majority that was contrary to the interest of the untouchables. Looking to the gravity of their interest, Ambedkar was interested in getting their representation "in proportion to their population" (ibid., P. 265). In an address delivered at the All India Scheduled Castes Federation held in Bombay on May 6, 1945, Ambedkar in a very definite tone has expressed the concern of the Scheduled Castes as well as the method by which they could overcome the impediment of their development by relying on the importance of being organized. It is here in this address that he expresses the need of the community "to educate, agitate and organize". He expresses his apathy at the plight of his community who are ignorant in these following words of concern: "There is the ignorance of our own people, who do not know the value of organization for achieving our political objects" (Ambedkar, Vol.1. P.357).

We all know the way in which Adolf Hitler happened to lead Germany. We all talk about the disastrous part of it. The calumny involved in the genocide. But little do we talk of Germany after the First World War. Germany after the First World War had lost everything including self-esteem. She was

humiliated psychologically- that was the kind of rut, out of which she could never have returned. Humiliation on one side, with unemployment and abject poverty into which its citizens were reduced to on the other side. There was no way out. Hitler by his ingenuity transformed this hopeless population into strength by reassuring them fame and everything else, at the cost of violence.

What Hitler did to Germany, was what Ambedkar was trying to do to the Dalits in India but with a difference. Ambedkar strenuously struggled to meet his objective as mighty as the challenge posed to the Germans after the First World War. This he achieved through constitutional means and without violence and bloodshed. He intended to transform this multitude which was hitherto splintered in a force to reckon with.

Up to 1932, the Untouchables were of no political importance. Then the political question was only between the Hindus and the Muslim only, with regard to the division of seats in the Legislature (Ambedkar, Vol.5, P. 241). The 1911 Census gave the total population of British India as 221.2 million, while the Depressed Classes constituted 41.9million. The 1921 Census estimated the population of Depressed Classes as 50million. In these points of time there were no disputes as to their number.

However, by 1932, the situation had completely changed. The question of partition was now between the Hindus, the Muslims and the Untouchables. The claim now was recognized by the British and the untouchables were allowed representation at the RTC. It was also recognized in principle of the separate existence of the untouchables and to give representation in all legislatures in proportion to their population. It is thus that the population of the untouchables became a subject of importance.

It is in this context that the touchable communities in India adopted a challenging mode and refused to accept the true figures of the untouchables of India. This is due to the fact that they realized the danger of admitting the existence of the untouchable in such huge number. The implication of this statement means that by accepting this proposition the 'Touchable' would lose a part of the representation which was hitherto enjoyed by them. Therefore, it proceeds that the lesser the population of the untouchables the greater the share of the political representation that would go to the Touchable Hindus. This explains why the Touchable before 1932 did not care over the population of the untouchables. Before 1932 the population of the untouchables was of little consequence as they were treated as part of the Hindu community and so the privileges addressed to the Hindu community were cashed off by the upper strata of the society while actually the untouchables were left in lurch. Now on account of a distinct recognition offered to the untouchable community in future they were to lose a greater chunk of advantage accrued to them. To proceed from these conclusions further to this day, the polemic of today involves:

1. The basis, on which reservation is exercised, is still on the basis of the 1931 Census.
2. While the overall population has grown, we do not have the accurate strength of dalit population in India today which is larger than British India.
3. There are a number of other communities which have been added to the list of the Scheduled Castes. Therefore their number should have definitely been larger than it is depicted.
4. There is a divisive strategy adopted by the touchable communities to divide the strength of the Scheduled Castes by racking time and again the issue of internal reservation.

In Karnataka the 1970's marked a distinct period in the history of dalit movement in Karnataka. The dalits assertion was at its best with the onset of awareness, education, and leadership which prompted the growth of a number of dalit organizations like the DSS. It definitely gave a jolt to the political ideologues in Karnataka.

The 1990's heralded the centenary celebrations of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. After this the BSP was able to organize the dalits under its able leader Kanshiram. By this Mayawathi also became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. It was also projected that in times to come she would also become the Prime Minister of India. It was at this point that we see communities making concerted attempts to destabilize the solidarity of the dalits.

It is with the onset of the new millennium that we see sub-caste identities emerging in Andhra as well as in Karnataka. Sub-caste consciousness emerged with dominant communities patronizing them. The dominant communities in Karnataka have seen the dalits as a force of the near future. This would mean that dalits in near future would also be capable of wielding the political control over Karnataka. This had to be sabotaged at the earliest. In 2005 a commission was constituted to look into the question of internal reservation. However, two Justices who were appointed for the purpose did not take up the work and finally it was entrusted to Justice A.J. Sadashiva. As funds were not allocated for the purpose it could not take off easily. The work of looking into the disparity between two pre-dominant communities within the scheduled caste became the center of focus during the coalition led government that was formed between the Janata Dal(secular) and BJP. After this, under the BJP led government the same commission came out with yet

newer dynamics that the two major dalit communities have taken away all the benefits and now attention has to be given to minor dalit groups. The first impact of this was felt in the political representations that were provided to the dalit communities. The divisive scheme of the touchable communities became even more evident. Due to this smaller groups among dalits formed independent association and carved out independent identities.

This thinking though profound is definitely disastrous to the dalits. This is the mechanisms by which the dominant communities want the dalits to keep them divided. Further sub-caste reservations and dominations exist in every caste. Now the question is, whether the generous dominant political representatives would first relinquish their own positions in favour of the deprived to set right what they call the anomaly of reservation? The answer is no or never. This the only polemic by which they can be in power. Secondly ever since independence the dalit community in Karnataka is as big as the other two dominant communities. But the paradox is that we are yet to see a dalit Chief Minister in Karnataka. The issue gets further subverted when the strength of dalits are taken into consideration in real terms. Thirdly the dominant castes never speak of internal reservation within their own community, forgetting the fact that caste do not exist in isolation.

CONCLUSION

It is in this context a rethinking in Ambedkar's ideology becomes a dissideratum in order to bring in reassurance to the dalits. But unfortunately even among dalits the self-centered and opportunist dalits have failed to understand the aspiration of Ambedkar. They have compromised their future and have become a pawn at the hands of the caste Hindus.

REFERENCE:

- 1.Vasant Moon (Ed).,(1989), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.1.
- 2.Vasant Moon(Ed)., (1982) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.2,
- 3.Vasant Moon(Ed)., (1987), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.3.
- 4.Vasant Moon(Ed)., (1987), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.4.
- 5.Vasant Moon(Ed)., (1989), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.5.
- 6.Vasant Moon(Ed)., (1989), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.6.
- 7.Vasant Moon(Ed)., (1990), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.7.
- 8.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.8 1990.
- 9.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.9 1990.
- 10.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.10 1991.
- 11.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.11 1992.
- 12.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.12 1993.
- 13.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.13 1994.
- 14.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.14, Part 1 1995.
- 15.Vasant Moon(Ed)., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Vol.14, Part 2 1995.